

Farragut, David Glasgow

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David Glasgow Farragut, b. July 5, 1801, d. Aug. 14, 1870, was an American naval officer who led the Union assaults upon New Orleans and Mobile Bay during the Civil War. Adopted by David Porter after the death of his parents, Farragut served as a midshipman at the age of nine. He served under Porter on the frigate Essex in the War of 1812 and was made prize master of a captured ship. From 1815 until 1861, Farragut alternated between routine sea duty and shore duty, with periods of leave. At the outbreak of the Civil War he was a senior officer with a long but undistinguished record of service.

A resident of Norfolk, Va., Farragut left for New York on Apr. 18, 1861, the day after Virginia seceded from the Union. Once satisfied with Farragut's loyalty to the Union, the Navy Department chose him to capture New Orleans, a major Northern objective. Farragut boldly led his ships past Forts Jackson and St. Philip, the principal obstacles on the Mississippi River below New Orleans. He arrived at the city on Apr. 25, 1862, and the army occupied it on May 1. Farragut's feat electrified the North, opened the lower Mississippi to Federal forces, and discouraged European intervention on behalf of the Confederacy. It also earned Farragut promotion to rear admiral; he was the first to hold that rank in the U.S. Navy.

On Aug. 5, 1864, Farragut similarly bypassed strongly defended forts in Mobile Bay to attack and destroy the Confederate warships defending Mobile, Ala. Although the city itself was not captured until April 1865, Farragut effectively closed the Confederacy's last major Gulf port. During a critical moment of this assault, when one ship's captain hesitated out of fear of Confederate mines--then called torpedoes--Farragut shouted, "Damn the torpedoes, full speed ahead." Between 1865 and 1870, Farragut was twice promoted, becoming the U.S. Navy's first four-star admiral.

Kenneth J. Hagan

Bibliography: Farragut, Loyall, *The Life of David Glasgow Farragut* (1879); Lewis, Charles L., *David Glasgow Farragut*, 2 vols. (1941, 1943); Mahan, Alfred Thayer, *Admiral Farragut* (1892; repr. 1970).

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